The Mechanics of Opt-Out

July 11, 2013   Ivan Handler

Basic mechanism

The Master Patient Index (MPI) is a repository that holds each patient's unique identifier as well as cross references to every electronic medical record known to ILHIE. Each patient in the ILHIE MPI will have a unique associated field identified as the **consent flag**. It will be a Boolean field with a value of **true** or **false**. True indicates the associated patient has opted out of participation in ILHIE. False is the default value and indicates the patient has not opted out of participation in ILHIE.

The flag can be set or queried by sending the appropriate XACML document to ILHIE via an XDS.b message. This document format, while standard, may not be produced by all EMRs. To make it easier for non-conforming EMRs to use this flag, ILHIE will develop a secure web service that will take in a few parameters such as the provider identifier, patient identifier and action to be performed and return an outcome (flag status, success or failure with an error code).

If a patient has opted-out of ILHIE, a message will be returned to any provider who queries for that patient's data indicating that no data is available through ILHIE. Due to privacy considerations, it will not be revealed that data is being blocked.

Please note that the patient can direct any provider with access to ILHIE's opt-out flag to change the flag setting at the patient's discretion. There is no limit to the number of times the flag can be changed and the flag has no history function. That is, the last setting is the only setting.

Finally, this flag will apply to all provider access.

Web Interface

A web interface will be developed to query and set the flag. This interface will utilize the web service described above. The provider, who must be a member of ILHIE or be a member of an HIE that has access to the opt-out flag, will have to log into the associated web page[1]. After a provider logs in, the provider will have the ability to query or set the flag of any patient in the MPI.

Batch Interface

There may be situations where it will be desirable to set the flag for more than one person at a time. An example is when an HIE joins ILHIE. ILHIE will have a batch file interface that can be used for that purpose.

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[1] Note, if a provider has access via an HIE only – that is the HIE is not a member of ILHIE but only uses the opt-out service – the provider will need to use special credentials given to the HIE in order to check or set the flag.

HIE Considerations

Whether or not an HIE joins the ILHIE, ILHIE will provide the consent flag as a free service. This is to ensure that whenever a patient makes a decision on consent, that the decision is visible to any provider engaged in electronic exchange in Illinois.

There are two different cases to consider:

The HIE shares its MPI with ILHIE

In this case, the HIE uses the identifier stored in the ILHIE MPI to identify the patient. The flag can be queried or set using any of the interfaces defined above.

The HIE does not share its MPI with ILHIE

In this case, the HIE must pass demographic data to ILHIE using the IHE XCA protocol to identify the patient so the flag can be queried or set. There are 3 cases to consider:

1. The ILHIE successfully identifies a unique patient. Operations on the flag proceed as above.
2. There is more than one match. ILHIE will respond with those matches to the HIE. In this case the HIE can send more data on the patient (from a predefined set of fields) to further define the patient in the hopes of removing ambiguity or select one of the matches.
3. In the case that no patient is matched, the HIE can modify the query (probably by dropping information) to see if that helps identify a patient.